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## Aids to Bible Readers.<sup>1</sup>

### THE EPISTLES OF THE IMPRISONMENT.

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*The letter to the Philippians ; the city of Philippi ; the date of the letter ; repeated communication between Paul and the Philippians ; occasion of this letter ; its purpose and character ; analysis.—The letters to Colossæ ; Colossians and Philemon sent together ; location of Colossæ ; origin of its Christian community ; Onesimus and letter to Philemon ; occasion of Colossians ; analysis.—The letter to the Ephesians ; Ephesus and the church there ; this letter not to the Ephesians exclusively ; written at the same time as Colossians ; purpose of the letter ; analysis.*

#### THE LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

THE two Macedonian cities to which the apostle Paul wrote letters that are still in existence, are both associated in history and by their names with Philip of Macedon. Thessalonica was named by Cassander for his wife, who had herself been named Thessalonica by her father Philip, in commemoration of the victory which he gained over the Thessalians. Philippi was the name which Philip himself gave to the city which he built upon the site of the ancient Krenides. Most students of ancient history will think of it chiefly as the site of the battle in which Brutus and Cassius were defeated by Octavian and Antony, and the Republic of Rome finally overthrown.

The earliest mention of this city in the New Testament is in 1 Thess. 2:2, where Paul says, "having suffered before and been shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we waxed bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God." Of the experiences at Philippi on his first journey through Macedonia, thus briefly referred to by the apostle, we have a full account in Acts, chap. 16. Indeed, Luke himself was doubtless an eyewitness of these events, as is implied in his use of the pronoun "we" in vss. 11-18.

The letter to the Philippians which we have in our New Testament

<sup>1</sup> Under this head will be published from month to month articles intended to furnish help in the intelligent *reading* of the books of the Bible *as books*. They will aim to present not so much fresh results of critical investigation as well-established and generally recognized conclusions.

was written from Rome when Paul was a prisoner there (Phil. 1:13-17; 4:22). But since as late as when Paul wrote to the Romans he had not yet seen the capital city, it is evident that between the founding of the Philippian church, and the writing of our Philippian letters there lie not only all the labors of which Acts 17:1-20:3, and the letters to the Thessalonians, Galatians, Corinthians and Romans tell us, but the voyage to Rome as well. The long cherished hope of seeing Rome (Rom. 15:22-30) has at length been realized, so far at least as the arrival at Rome is concerned. How he reached there Acts, chaps. 20-28, tell us.

But this long interval between the visit to Philippi mentioned in 1 Thess. 2:2 and the writing of the letter before us, was by no means one of silence on his part or theirs. Twice, at least, while he was still in Macedonia, the Philippians sent him money to Thessalonica (Phil. 4:16) and still again when he passed beyond Macedonia, and was laboring in Corinth (Phil. 4:15; 2 Cor. 11:9). Is it not altogether probable that on each of these occasions Paul sent back some word, perhaps a brief letter at least, in acknowledgment of these gifts? This seems particularly probable in the case of the gift sent to Corinth, since we know that at about this time he sent a letter into Macedonia, our First Thessalonians. But it was not by letters only that communication had been kept up between the apostle and the church. Twice, it seems, he had visited them. When he left Ephesus after writing First Corinthians, he came into Macedonia (2 Cor. 7:5 ff), and doubtless to Philippi, since both the convenience of following the main roads of travel and the desire to see the brethren whose relations to him had been so peculiarly close would lead him thither. Again, on returning from Corinth, on his way to Jerusalem for the last time, he stopped at Philippi (Acts 20:6). Coming still nearer to the time of the writing of the letter—we learn that since Paul's arrival in Rome the Philippians have sent Epaphroditus to him with a gift, and that word has been carried back to Philippi of the sickness of Epaphroditus at Rome (Phil. 2:25 ff; 4:10 ff). During all these years, therefore, Paul has been well informed concerning the affairs of his brethren in Philippi. His relations to them have been, moreover, especially intimate and friendly. The freedom with which he accepted money from them, while refusing it from the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8), and the Corinthians (2 Cor. 11:7-9; concerning the Ephesians see Acts 20:34), testifies to his perfect confidence in them; and the silence of this letter concerning any serious error of

doctrine or life indicates that the church had been exceptionally free from those things which had made the "care of all the churches" such a burden of anxiety and responsibility to the apostle.

The special occasion of this particular letter—perhaps the fourth that Paul wrote the Philippians—is evidently furnished by the gift which Epaphroditus brought, and by the fact that he, now recovered from his illness, is about to return to Philippi (4:10-18; 2:25-30). The gift itself Paul may already have acknowledged, since he could probably have done so by the same messenger who carried to Philippi the news of the illness of Epaphroditus. But now that Epaphroditus is about to return he seizes the opportunity to tell the Philippians of his present situation, hopes and fears, to exhort and warn and encourage them, and in closing, once more to express his gratitude for their thoughtful remembrance of him and supply of his need. A definitely marked purpose controlling the whole letter is scarcely discernible. The dangers against which he warns are those which proceed from the judaizers, and from those who, going to the other extreme, perverted the Pauline doctrine of the sufficiency of faith either into an easy contentment with their present attainments, or into a still grosser justification of the indulgence of sin (chap 3). But this whole chapter was apparently introduced as an after-thought, and of the errorists to which it refers, we gain the impression that only those who too easily counted themselves perfect (3:15) are represented among the Philippians themselves; the judaizers and the sensualists constitute as yet only a danger from without. Aside from this, the only fault which is mentioned in such a way as to suggest that it existed among the Philippians is that of pride and factiousness (2:1-11; 4:2, 3), and even this is so lightly touched upon as to imply that it was not present to a serious degree. In the main the letter is simply the natural outpouring of the apostle's heart to a church with which he has always had the pleasantest relations, and with which he has little fault to find.

But if any one hastily concludes that a letter written thus without sharply defined and single purpose is necessarily tame and commonplace, he will greatly err. Whether Paul ever wrote a dull and uninteresting letter we do not surely know. Certain it is that the letter which Epaphroditus carried back to Philippi was not of that character. Interesting glimpses into the apostle's situation and experiences in Rome, and a still more interesting revelation of some of his deepest thoughts concerning Christ, warm personal affection and lofty religious aspiration, flashes of indignation against the mischief makers, and

tears of grief over those who pervert the doctrine of Christ, combine to make a letter of surpassing charm and interest. Were it the only Pauline letter extant we should still be able to form a fairly true picture of Paul, and a fairly just conception of what he believed and what he stood for. For its information concerning the life of the apostle and its light upon his character, for its contribution to a knowledge of his doctrinal conception of Christianity, and for its more general testimony to the history of the Apostolic Age, the letter will richly repay careful study. The following outline will show its course of thought :

I. INTRODUCTION.	1: 1-11
1. Salutation.	1: 1, 2
2. Thanksgiving and prayer for the Philippians.	1: 3-11
II. ACCOUNT OF HIS OWN AFFAIRS AND EXPECTATIONS.	1: 12-26
III. EXHORTATIONS TO THE PHILIPPIANS.	1: 27-2: 18
1. (Closely connected with II.) To live worthily, even in the midst of persecutions.	1: 27-30
2. To live in unity and love, enforced by the example of Christ.	2: 1-11
3. In general, to live a worthy Christian life.	2: 12-18
IV. CONCERNING TIMOTHY AND EPAPHRODITUS, and Paul's own hope to come to Philippi.	2: 19-30
[Concluding exhortations begun, but immediately broken off.	3: 1]
V. WARNING AGAINST THE ERROR OF THE JUDAIZERS AND AGAINST THE OPPOSITE ERROR OF ANTINOMIANISM.	3: 2-4: 1
1. Against the Judaizers, enforced by his own experience and example.	3: 2-11
2. Disclaimer of the (Antinomian) error that the beginning of salvation is also its end.	3: 12-16
3. Against a self-indulgent (Antinomian) manner of life.	3: 17-21
4. Concluding exhortation to stand fast in the Lord.	4: 1
VI. VARIOUS EXHORTATIONS.	4: 2-9
1. To Christian unity.	4: 2, 3
2. To Christian joy and trust.	4: 4-7
3. To all virtue.	4: 8, 9
VII. THANKS FOR THE GIFT OF THE PHILIPPIANS.	4: 10-20
VIII. CONCLUSION: Salutations and benediction.	4: 21-23

#### THE LETTERS TO COLOSSÆ.

Several circumstances combine to indicate that the letter to Philemon and that to the Colossians were sent at the same time and to the same place. Thus both were written when Paul was a prisoner (Philem.

1:1; Col. 4:10, 18); in both he joins the name of "Timothy the brother" with his own in the salutation; in both he sends the salutations of Aristarchus, Mark, Epaphras, Luke, and Demas (Philem. 23; Col. 4:10-14); in the letter to Philemon, Archippus is joined with Philemon in the address, and Col. 4:17 it is implied that he is in Colossæ; and, what is most conclusive, Onesimus accompanies both letters, and is distinctly designated as a Colossian (Philem. 10; Col. 4:9). We have, therefore, in this case two letters to Colossæ, one to the whole Christian community, the other to a single man on private business.

Where was Colossæ, and what were Paul's relations to the Colossians? Of the four rivers of some importance which empty into the *Ægean* Sea from Asia Minor, the southernmost is the *Mæander*, near the mouth of which lies Miletus. Some ninety miles from the sea it receives the waters of its tributary, the *Lycus*. On the banks of the *Lycus*, twenty miles or so from its junction with the *Mæander*, in the uplands of the province of Asia, lay the ancient Phrygian city of Colossæ. Its neighbors, Laodicea and Hierapolis, are both mentioned in Paul's letter to the Colossians (2:1; 4:13, 15). Had Paul not been constrained to change the plan which he had formed for the second missionary journey (Acts 16:6) he would probably have visited all these cities at that time; for one of the main roads from Pisidian Antioch to Ephesus ran through the *Lycus* Valley. But though he neither then nor later labored personally in these cities (Col. 2:1), it was doubtless through the indirect influence of his work in Ephesus that the Colossian church was founded (Acts 19:10, 26). Among the members of this Christian community were Archippus, who had somewhere, probably in Ephesus, been associated with Paul in Christian service (Col. 4:18; Philem. 1); Epaphras, who seems to have been chiefly instrumental in preaching the gospel in Colossæ (Col. 4:12; 1:6, 7); and Philemon, at whose house the Christians or a portion of them were accustomed to assemble (Philem. 1). Probably all of these had been converted under Paul's influence (Col. 1:7; Philem. 2, 19), perhaps at Ephesus.

The letter to Philemon tells plainly the story of its occasion. Onesimus, a runaway slave of Philemon, had drifted to the city of Paul's imprisonment, *Cæsarea*, or more probably Rome, and coming under the apostle's influence was converted. Paul sends him back to his master, but with him a letter to Philemon, in which, with infinite tact and most gracious courtesy, he bids Philemon receive the runaway

no longer as a slave, but as a brother beloved. Nothing could more beautifully illustrate the skill and gentleness of Paul, or the way in which the principles of Christianity softened and mollified those harsh institutions of ancient life for the full abolition of which the time had not yet come.

The occasion of the letter to the Colossians also appears, though somewhat less clearly than in the case of that to Philemon, in the letter itself. Epaphras had brought Paul word of "the love in the Spirit" of the Colossians (1:8). But from the same source, or from some other, Paul had evidently learned of certain men who had been disseminating false teaching among them (2:8 ff). This leaven of false teaching must have been in part Jewish and legalistic, as the reference to circumcision, new moons and Sabbath days (2:11, 16) implies, yet was characterized also by philosophical speculation (2:8), the worship of angels (2:18), and asceticism (2:20-23). Whether these new elements were also of Jewish origin, or whether they reveal the influence of Greek thinking is not easy to determine. But whatever the source of this new teaching, it is evident that the tendency was to rob Christ of his preëminent place as the perfect revelation of God, the all-sufficient Saviour, the head of the church. To check these errors before they assume serious dimensions is plainly the chief purpose of the letter. The first chapter emphasizes the corrective truths, setting forth the exalted nature and office of Christ and the sufficiency of his work, and the latter part of the letter adds practical exhortations; but it is the second chapter that most clearly reflects the situation which the letter is intended to meet, and furnishes the key for the understanding of the whole. The plan of the letter is somewhat as follows:

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|--|---------|
| I. SALUTATION.   | 1:1, 2  |
| II. PERSONAL PORTION OF THE LETTER: The apostle's relation to his readers, his thanksgiving, prayer, sufferings for them, and deep interest in them, with which is also blended exalted description of the office and nature of Christ, and of salvation in him. |         |
| 1. The thanksgiving for the faith and love of his readers.   | 1:3—2:5 |
| 2. Prayer for them, passing into description of Christ according to his nature and office.   | 1:3-8   |
| 3. The apostle's sufferings on their behalf and his office as a minister of the gospel.  | 1:9-23  |
| 4. His deep interest in his readers and other Christians not personally known to him.  | 1:24-29 |
|  | 2:1-5   |

- III. DOCTRINAL PORTION OF THE LETTER. Warning against the false teachers who, by philosophy, would lead them from Christ. 2: 6-23
- IV. HORTATORY PORTION OF THE LETTER. 3: 1-4: 6
1. Exhortation to live a heavenly life on earth. 3: 1-4
  2. To put away the earthly deeds of the unrenewed nature. 3: 5-11
  3. To put on the things which belong to God. 3: 12-17
  4. Respecting domestic relations. 3: 18-4: 1
  5. Prayer and other Christian duties. 4: 2-6
- V. CONCLUSION. 4: 7-18
1. Concerning Tychicus and Onesimus. 4: 7-9
  2. Salutations from those with him. 4: 10-14
  3. Salutations to brethren at Colossæ and instructions concerning the reading of the letter. 4: 15-17
  4. Signature and benediction. 4: 18

## THE LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS.

At the mouth of the river Cayster, on the western coast of Asia Minor, almost directly across the Ægean Sea from Corinth, was the ancient city of Ephesus. Admirably situated for commerce, both by sea and by land, the capital of the Roman province of Asia, the seat of the world-famous Temple of Diana, it was next to Rome itself the most important city in which Christianity was planted in the lifetime of Paul.

The letters of Paul are singularly silent concerning his work in Ephesus. Aside from two passing allusions to it in 1 Cor. (15: 32; 16: 8) he never mentions it in any letter preceding the one now before us. What we know of the early history of the church we learn from the book of Acts. Though there were Christians in Ephesus before Paul entered upon his labors there on his third missionary journey, yet it was doubtless due chiefly to these labors that there grew up in this great city a strong Christian church, and that Christianity obtained a strong foothold in the province of Asia (Acts, chap. 19 and 20: 17-35).

But was the letter known as the Epistle to the Ephesians really addressed to this church in Ephesus with which Paul lived and labored for more than two years? Most of the manuscripts, indeed, contain the words "at Ephesus" in 1: 1. Yet three of the most trustworthy manuscripts omit these words, and there is other ancient evidence against them. This external evidence and the absence of personal references and of that tone of intimacy which so strongly characterizes all the letters of the apostle to the churches with which he had labored,



has led many to conclude, probably rightly, that it was a circular letter addressed to a group of churches with most of which Paul had no personal acquaintance. It is not, however, necessary to exclude Ephesus from the list of churches addressed, since a circular letter must evidently be written upon the plane, so to speak, upon which all the churches addressed stand in common.

The fact that the same messenger, Tychicus, accompanied both this letter and that to the Colossians, and is in both commended in almost identical words (Col. 4:7, 8; Eph. 6:21, 22), together with the strong similarity of the two letters in other respects, makes it practically certain that this letter was sent at the same time with the two to Colossæ. Indeed, it is more than possible that this is the letter referred to in Col. 4:16 which the Colossians were to get from Laodicea and read.

And this fact respecting the time of writing may furnish us a clue to the occasion and purpose of the letter. Paul was sending two letters to Colossæ. The messenger would naturally pass through Ephesus, and near to other cities in which there were Gentile Christian churches, indirectly the product of the apostle's labors. Here then was a favorable opportunity to address to them words calculated to strengthen their faith and build them up in knowledge and Christian character. There is, indeed, a noticeable absence of any reference to the false teaching of which the Colossian letter speaks, and this undoubtedly indicates that the error was not as yet widespread. Neither is any other error of doctrine or of life directly criticised. The Ephesian letter is positive and constructive, not polemical or even distinctly corrective. It reminds us in this respect of the first chapter of the Colossian letter, though the range of thought is wider in the Ephesian than in the Colossian letter.

While, therefore, the sending of the Colossian letter may have suggested the sending of this also, and while the thoughts called forth in the correction of the Colossian error seem to have given color to the encyclical epistle also, its purpose is not identical with that of Colossians, but somewhat broader and more general. Possibly we may discern two influences at work, and giving character to the writing. First, we must recognize the movement of the apostle's own thought. Both the Colossian and the Ephesian letter, the latter especially, show that he has been dwelling on the loftiest and broadest themes of Christian thought. He has risen above the controversies of the hour; Christ and his church are seen in their relation to the eternal divine plan, that plan itself seems spread out before his eyes. The purpose

of God, formed from eternal ages, now revealed as never before, destined to be fulfilled in ages to come ; the Son of God, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in whom it is the divine purpose to sum up all things ; the universal church, which is the body of Christ, and includes both Jews and Gentiles ; the ideal of perfect Christian character to be attained through Christ in us — these are the themes that have occupied his thought. The very thinking of these thoughts would carry with it for him the desire to share them and their uplifting power with his brethren, and would impel him to seize the opportunity afforded by the going of Tychicus to Asia to write them down in a letter for these distant fellow believers.

But an additional motive reënforcing this impulse may well have been furnished by the situation at Colossæ. Though the Colossian error is as yet confined to Colossæ or to its immediate vicinity, so that it would be unwise to make any definite reference to it in a circular letter, yet the very existence of it would remind the apostle how subject to the attack of error all the churches are, and would impel him to do what he could to prepare them against every form of false teaching. A letter having that purpose must necessarily be general in character ; yet if one was to be written what could it better contain than an exposition upon a broad and lofty plane of the glories of salvation in Christ—a salvation provided in the eternal counsel of God, rich with present blessings, pure and high in its moral teachings, most glorious in its hopes and promises for the future, even for the ages to come? Nor is there altogether lacking a hint that he has somewhat specially in mind the danger that the Colossian heresy itself will spread. The heart of that error was too low a conception of the nature and office of Christ ; and this letter, like that to the Colossians, exalts Christ, showing how the whole plan of salvation centers in him.

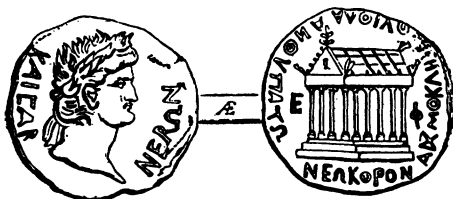
If the Christians of Asia can be made to see the glories of salvation in Christ, if they can gain something of Paul's own vision of the unsearchable riches in Christ, and can perceive that they are truly in Christ and in him only, then there is little danger that any teaching, though coming with the specious names of philosophy and asceticism, will be able to seduce them from the gospel which they have heard and accepted. With some such thought and purpose, we may believe, the apostle wrote this remarkable letter to the churches of Asia ; least personal of all his letters, telling us little either concerning the apostle's own situation or that of his readers, but giving us the broadest view of Christianity, as it appeared to Paul, of anything that we have from his

pen. Such passages as Rom. 11:33-36; 16:25-27; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:9-29 have shown the apostle's capacity for this sort of writing, but no other letter furnishes so long-sustained an example of it. The apostle himself almost disappears from view, leaving us face to face with this wonderfully uplifting and broadening view of Christ and the salvation that is in him. The following analysis is an attempt to show the course of thought of the letter :

## ANALYSIS.

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|---|------------|
| I. SALUTATION.  | 1: 1, 2    |
| II. A DESCRIPTION OF SALVATION IN CHRIST, expressed in praise, thanksgiving, prayer, reminder; laying emphasis on the eternal purpose of God, on the richness of salvation, on the supremacy of Christ over all things, and on the unity of the church in Christ. | 1: 3—2: 22 |
| 1. Ascription of praise to God for the blessings of salvation in Christ.  | 1: 3-14    |
| 2. Thanksgiving for the faith of those to whom the letter is sent, and prayer for them that they may know the riches of this salvation.   | 1: 15-23   |
| 3. Reminds his readers how great a change has been wrought for them by the life-giving grace of God.  | 2: 1-10    |
| 4. Reminds them of their former state of separation from Christ, and declares that in Christ all former distinctions between Jew and Gentile are abolished, both being reconciled in one body unto God through the Cross.   | 2: 11-22   |
| III. TRANSITION TO THE HORTATORY PORTION OF THE LETTER: the apostle's right to pray for them and exhort them, and his prayer for them.  | chap. 3    |
| 1. The stewardship given to him for them—The mystery of Christ which has been revealed to him.  | 3: 1-13    |
| 2. The prayer for them that they may know the fulness of blessing in Christ.  | 3: 14-19   |
| 3. Doxology.  | 3: 20, 21  |
| IV. HORTATORY PORTION OF THE LETTER.  | 4: 1—6: 20 |
| 1. To maintain unity in Christ.   | 4: 1-16    |
| 2. To forsake the old impure heathen life and put on the new man.   | 4: 17-24   |
| 3. Warning against falsehood, anger, theft, malice, evil-speaking.  | 4: 25-32   |
| 4. Exhortation to love, and warning against uncleanness and covetousness.   | 5: 1-14    |
| 5. Exhortation to be wise and sober.  | 5: 15-21   |

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| 6. Concerning domestic relations.  | 5:22—6:9 |
| <i>a.</i> On the relations of husband and wife as parallel to that of Christ and the church. | 5:22—33  |
| <i>b.</i> On the relations of parents and children.  | 6:1—4    |
| <i>c.</i> On those of master and servants.   | 6:5—9    |
| 7. Concluding exhortation to put on the whole armor of God.                                  | 6:10—20  |
| V. CONCLUSION.   | 6:21—24  |
| 1. Concerning Tychicus.  | 6:21, 22 |
| 2. Final Benediction.  | 6:23, 24 |



Coin of Ephesus.